

STATE HISTORICAL
SOCIETY OF IOWA
IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

The Annals of Iowa

Volume 74 | Number 2 (Spring 2015)

pps. 202-203

Prairie Boys at War: Korea, volume 1, June-October 1950

Paul M. Edwards

ISSN 0003-4827

Copyright © 2015 State Historical Society of Iowa. This article is posted here for personal use,
not for redistribution

Recommended Citation

Edwards, Paul M.. "Prairie Boys at War: Korea, volume 1, June-October 1950." *The Annals of Iowa* 74 (2015), 202-203.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.12202>

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](http://iowa-research-online.org)

Bindas did an excellent job leading his students through a process of shared inquiry and blending diverse voices into one cohesive narrative that sheds light on the important interconnection between social and land reform during the New Deal and places that connection squarely on the landscape. Bindas's class project is an admirable example of public history teaching and scholarship. However, the book is perhaps too laudatory of the CCC's accomplishments. The CCC program suffered some notable administrative problems, particularly a high rate of desertion. (See John Salamond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933–1942: A New Deal Case Study* [1967].) Probing such issues might have opened a poignant discussion.

This book is set in northeastern Ohio, but those interested in New Deal parks across the country will undoubtedly find it a useful starting point for interrogating such landscapes. In Iowa 46,000 CCC enrollees worked on projects in the state, and nearly 41 camps were organized for state park projects. (See Rebecca Conard, *Places of Quiet Beauty: Parks, Preserves, and Environmentalism* [1997]).

Prairie Boys at War: Korea, volume 1, June–October 1950, by M. M. Helm. Fargo, N.D.: Prairie Boy Books, 2014. v, 494 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. \$22.00 paperback.

Reviewer Paul M. Edwards is Senior Fellow at the Center for the Study of the Korean War in Independence, Missouri. He compiled *The Korean War: An Annotated Bibliography* (1998).

The Korean War, long known as the “forgotten war,” might perhaps be better identified as the “ignored war.” It is not so much that Americans have forgotten this war as that they have never taken it seriously. Americans have never understood their nation's involvement nor appreciated the cost paid by its young men and women. One aspect of that has been a lack of recognition and respect for those who participated, as well as a lack of understanding of the vast national and international significance of the war itself. This volume makes an effort to correct some of these misunderstandings.

Shortly after the massive efforts of World War II, the United States, caught unprepared, opted to invest in the independence of the Republic of (South) Korea and called its young men and women back into service for a long and deadly war—a war that continues today, and one in which Americans are still involved. Merry Helm has undertaken a massive task with her decision to record the actions and citations of the men and women from the Prairie states who fought in the Korean War. This includes dozens of persons from Iowa. She provides a series of profiles

in which she considers the involvement, the actions, the heroics, and the often considerable sacrifice of those who fought. Her numerous stories cover all sorts of men and women, all ranks, all services, all circumstances, amazingly constructed to provide some insight into the individuals. This first volume (June–October 1950) covers the opening of the war, the massive retreat to the Pusan Perimeter, the breakout of the Eighth Army, and the invasion of Inchon. It concludes there, leaving the discussion of the Chinese invasion and the hill and outpost war for subsequent volumes.

While the scope of her work is limited to those from the Prairie states, the book is very informative about the early days of the Korean War, thus giving it an appeal to a far larger audience. More a creative historian than a military scholar, Helm provides some interpretations of action and behavior that are still open to question, as, for example, her identification of the flaws in MacArthur's entrapment plan (355). But these do not detract from her primary purpose. In the main the material is clearly and responsibly presented. The one drawback is a problem common to this type of work; that is, even though each individual and action is special and worthy of remembrance and appreciation, when combined together in this format the efforts presented often appear redundant. It is perhaps best read over an extended period of time.

The book is well written, even exciting at times, highly informative, and especially valuable if you or one of yours is mentioned. The author obviously cares that these stories are well told, and she has accomplished that. All in all, it is an honest and well-prepared honor to those who so deserve this recognition.

Cold War Kids: Politics and Childhood in Postwar America, 1945–1960, by Marilyn Irvin Holt. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2014. ix, 214 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Jennifer Robin Terry is a doctoral candidate in history at the University of California, Berkeley. Her work looks at social and political intersections in American children's lives in the mid-twentieth century.

What do school lunch programs, the Indian Adoption Project, and eleven 1955 deaths from contaminated polio vaccines have in common? They all resulted, Marilyn Irvin Holt tells us in *Cold War Kids*, from an unprecedented uptick in federal intervention in American children's lives from 1945 to 1960. Holt explains that increased federal attention to childhood issues marks the period as a turning point in Americans' expectations and acceptance of federal responsibility and leadership in their everyday affairs. Although studies of children's history during the